

SALVIA NEWS

SPRING 2009

Number 38



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

SALVIA STUDY GROUP

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THE NOBELIUS HERITAGE PARK SALVIA COLLECTION IS CARED FOR BY THE SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN FRIENDS GROUP

Lyndi Garnett, Bevan Whelan, Jillian Barkell, Marilyn Johnson, Neil and Margaret Keir, Pat and John Thomson, Geoff and Jennifer Ellis, Karen Meeuwissen, Meg Bentley, Pat Anderson, Christine McDermott.

If your name isn't here please let Lyndi know.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP IS TO GROW AND COLLECT SALVIAS FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH

We study the growth of salvias in gardens enabling us to identify, name and propagate existing and new salvias. Together with members and similar study groups throughout Australia, we exchange information, seeds and cuttings. The gardens of the registered GPA Collections in Hampton & Nobelius Heritage Park in Emerald are planted and maintained by us. Salvia plants are collected and propagated for private and registered collections and are also sold at various Garden Shows throughout Melbourne and Victoria.

Details of venues and dates of Garden Shows and Gatherings are published in SALVIA NEWS and on our website: www.salvias.org.au.



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Victorian Salvia Study Group

A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria

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From the Editor Trudi Fry

So this is Spring. It just aint what it used to be! My rocky exposed ridge top garden has been whipped by unreasonable gales, baked by desert winds, lashed by sleet and hail and even had a blessing of good rains. Now after a week of searingly hot days still the salvias are a mass of colour and the garden is also vibrant with about 20 doryanthes flowers (the Gymea Spear Lily and our first doryanthes exelsa Torch Lily). The birds are ecstatic. Don and I bought the Torch Lily plant the last time we went to NSW before he became ill and now 16 years later it is flowering. I know that Gymea Lilies are common in NSW but here they are traffic stoppers. What the Torch one looks like really is a fifteen foot stick of asparagus with a giant red cabbage on top. I love it.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2009 -2010

December 6th Sunday 11am Christmas Party

Pat and John Anderson's Garden at 11am
98 Bradley's Lane, Warrandyte. Ph: 9844 3442
Mel: 23-C12
Bring lunch to share, chair and gift plants,
not necessarily salvias.

February 6th and 7th Saturday & Sunday 10am - 4.30pm

Mark Dymiotis's Open Garden

21 Barnett Street, Hampton. Mel: 76-K5

Come and enjoy Mark's edible garden as well as a significant collection of salvias with guided tours.

There will be no salvias for sale. Entrance fee \$6

February 20th and 21st Saturday & Sunday

Ferny Creek: Fourth Annual Collectors' Sale and Garden Expo.

100 Hilton Rd, Ferny Creek. Mel: 66-E12

Numerous rare plants for sale including our salvias. Plenty of parking. Lunch, morning and afternoon teas available. There will be guided garden walks.

March 13th/14th

The Andersons' garden will be open as part of the Warrandyte Festival and under the auspices of the Open Garden Scheme (10am - 4.30pm both days, entry \$6.00). There will be loads of plants for sale, including salvias, and all money raised will be donated to the North Warrandyte CFA. 98 Bradleys Lane, Warrandyte. For enquiries ring Pat or John on 9844 3442 Sorry to add this at this late hour. Thanks Pat

IT WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED IF SALVIA NEWS ARTICLES REACHED EITHER ME OR IRENE EARLY NEXT YEAR.

THE NOBELIUS DISPLAY GARDEN CAUSED SO MUCH INTEREST THAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO A COMPREHENSIVE ARTICLE OR ARTICLES ON IT AND US AND I AM EAGER TO PUT ALL THE INFORMATION THAT EVERYONE HAS ON A FILE FOR THE FUTURE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT "STYLE" JUST "GIMME THE FACTS". TRUDI

REMEMBER TO BUY A LOVELY SALVIA CALENDER FOR YOUR NEAREST AND DEAREST AND OF COURSE FOR YOUR SELF TO SUPPORT THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

The Official Opening of Salvia Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park.

A visitor to the Opening of the Salvia Display Garden would be able to sense the excitement in the air when arriving at the Nobelius Display Garden on Sunday 15th November.

The garden beds were overflowing with flowering plants. Where else would we be able to see such a comprehensive display of a collection of Salvias in prime condition? We are indebted to all those who have worked over the past two years to establish and bring this garden to its peak under the guidance of Lyndi and Jillian.

The setting was perfect. The weather was ideal. It was a lovely experience for visitors as they arrived, walking up the gravel road into the Nobelius Heritage Park across the grass and into the shade of glorious trees. Then out into the sunshine to see the display beds of Salvias in flower and in the background the old golden- painted timber Nobelius Packing Shed.

Under the trees, green covered tables were set out packed with the best selection of Salvias anyone could imagine for sale. Many visitors came to the tables with prepared lists of Salvias to purchase and to add to their collections; others were directed to the beds of Salvias in the Display Garden to select from the variety of flowering plants large and small all clearly named with excellent labels...

Refreshments were available throughout the day in the Packing Shed. Tables were set with bowls of flowers including salvias inside and out on the railway platform where visitors could sit, eat, chat and wave to the passengers on the passing Puffing Billy trains.

Award winning garden writer, Penny Woodward, was invited to open this Salvia Display Garden and her address in praise of our project and of Salvias is printed elsewhere in this edition of Salvia News.

In her introduction Lyndi thanked the many people and groups who had worked so hard towards the success of the day.

Margaret Keir

PENNY WOODWARD'S SPEECH AT NOBELIUS SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN

Salvias are a diverse and exciting family of plants with, as you can see, colours ranging from deep velvet purples and blues right through rich reds, pinks, yellows and even brown. No garden should be without at least a few. With a bit of planning, it is possible to have a salvia in flower in the garden all year round.

Salvias are one of the largest genera in the world with over 900 different species and almost as many cultivars and varieties.

They are natives to North, Central and South America, most of Europe, Southern Africa and several Asian countries, especially China, but there is only one species native to Australia (*S. plebeia*, austral sage).

Given their good looks, ease of cultivation and drought tolerance it is surprising that salvias are not more widely grown.

Aromatic salvias

Many salvias are aromatic with a high oil content in their leaves and have been used in medicine or for cooking all over the world. Those salvias with strongly scented leaves also seem to be unattractive to grazing animals like rabbits, possums and even kangaroos. As well, many leaf-eating and sap sucking insects are repelled by the scent, making the strongly scented

salvias useful companion plants in the garden, as they confuse and repel pests. I grow some strongly scented salvias near the vegetable garden and under fruit trees, where they repel pests but also attract bees to help with pollination.

Food sources

In their natural habitats salvias are important sources of nectar for birds, bees, butterflies and insects. Birds also feed on their seeds. In America salvias are essential to the tiny hummingbirds that feed on them. In Australia the same salvias attract honey-eaters and spine bills who delight in their nectar. My pineapple sage lures the beautifully marked eastern spinebills to my garden right through winter. Other local birds come to feed on salvia seeds and the insects attracted to the flowers. Blue and mauve flowered salvias also attract butterflies.

The large numbers of species and cultivars, and the ease of cross-pollination between species, means that it is often difficult to correctly identify an individual plant. Also the numbers are increasing all the time because of new cultivars and new discoveries in the wild. The diversity and breadth of this family has given rise to a large group of passionate and committed collectors all over the world.

Laid out here before you is the end result of this passion and dedication. This group of Salvia lovers has worked for countless hours to create this delightful and fascinating garden. We are so lucky to be able to come here, to see them growing and observe how they survive a variety of different conditions. There is a salvia for almost every garden position, now, due to the dedication of these passionate gardeners we can come and see them here before we put them into our gardens.

It is now my absolute pleasure to declare this garden open.

Penny has won two awards from the Horticultural Media of Australia for her article 'Sensational Salvias' in Organic Gardening Magazine and for her book Herbs for Australian Gardens.

Her new book is Growing Easy Herbs for Beauty, Fragrance and Flavour.

Nobelius Notables

What a splendid day we all had at Nobelius on the 15th November. It was hot, but not as hot as some of the days before and after. More particularly, if the official opening of Nobelius had been one week later, it would have been washed out by the first real rain in a month. The garden looked fantastic, in spite of the heatwave and dry conditions, the packing shed looked festive, there was a good range of plants for sale and there was plenty of good feedback. One person had flown down from New South Wales and a group

that had come all the way from Wangaratta even asked if it was going to be an annual event.

It would be impossible to thank every single person who had contributed in some way to making the event a success, but there are three people who deserve particular recognition and I regret that the brief formalities slipped by without this happening publicly. These are:

Jillian Barkell: Quite a few people had raised plants for the occasion, but this paled into insignificance alongside the nursery-scale propagating and maintenance that Jillian had carried out, and continues to carry out, so that there is a constant supply of plants to cover all the many other events – Pakenham, Baw Baw, Upwey, Rose Shows, Ferny Creek, Tesselaar’s and all the many garden club talks that take place during the year. Then there is the transport of all of these plants, together with tables, cash box, paper work, watering cans etc, etc. An occasion like Nobelius requires at least two trips for setting up. For weeks, Jillian has been going to Nobelius, together with Lyndi, on a weekly basis to plant, prune, weed etc. On top of all this, she made two trips to Renmark and back, which is a very long drive, to deliver and later to collect from her brother the engraving machine for making the labels, that needed fixing (see below).

Peter Tucker: Jillian’s brother is an engineering genius. Not only did he willingly agree to look at, and fix, the second-hand engraving machine (and show me how to use it), he undertook to design and construct a means of displaying the engraved plates. The design is unique. Having worked out a way of making and folding a piece of galvanised metal, with lugs pressed out of the back to take the mounting wire, he then designed and constructed the machine to do this and proceeded to create 250 of these pockets. He also had to make modifications to the machine after he tempered the steel and discovered that parts had shrunk so that the pockets would no longer take the labels which, by this time, I had already engraved! What a generous and devoted brother he is.

Lyndi Garnett: As mentioned above, Lyndi has been going up to Nobelius on a weekly basis for months. She too raises heaps of plants. But it is Lyndi who has had to think through all the aspects and ramifications of the Open Day – first aiders, signage, parking, vehicles for transporting visitors from the car park, drivers for the vehicles, hiring the packing shed, organising the scouts to serve the food, organising the food, arranging helpers for the plant stall and arranging a guest for the official opening. More particularly it is Lyndi who has had to deal with Council on matters pertaining to the public space – slippery slopes, steps they wouldn’t build etc, and I know all about how difficult Council’s can be on such matters.

So, as well as thanking everyone who contributed in one way or another to the day, it is to these three people I would like to say a special thank you on behalf of the Salvia Study Group.

Pat Anderson 6/03/2019

A THANK YOU LETTER

Just a note to thank you and all your members for a wonderful day at the Salvia Open Day held at Nobelius Park on 15th November. The detail and organisation assigned to every aspect of the day did not go unnoticed, nor unappreciated.

Special thanks to the driver who ferried our group from the oval to the park, the wonderful food that was so beautifully catered, the ladies manning the plant stalls who so cheerfully and with such knowledge were able to determine which salvia I was after just

from my vague description and members who seemed to miraculously appear just when my friends and I were wondering about a particular plant in the salvia garden.

One of my party (Ruth from NSW) headed for the airport carrying 6 tightly packed plastic bags of salvias. Obviously Ruth had carefully pre planned her spending spree, as she carried a shopping list, lots of newspaper to wrap each plant for its trip on the airplane and a trolley suitcase in which to carry them.

So on behalf of Cheryl (President Sunbury Garden Club), Urzula, Ruth and myself, thank you all very much for a great day.

By the way, my Salvia 'Hot lips', *S. azurea*, *S. 'Heatwave Sizzle'*, *S. 'Waverly'*, *S. 'Anthony Parker'*, *S. Phyllis Fancy'*, *S. 'Mulberry Jam'*, and *S.leucantha* and alba are handling the intensive prolonged hot dry of the north brilliantly, however I cannot say the same for my *S. 'Black Knight'*, bog sage, *S. 'Limelight'*, *S. 'Indigo Spires'* and especially *S.iodantha* which is tragically wilting and quite pitiful (even with additional watering, water crystals, Stress Guard and home made mulch). (Sorry about the names. I am a new comer to salvias).

Faye Heazlewood

Sunbury Garden Club

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was an invited guest to the opening of the Salvia gardens. I met my sister at a salvia bed intersection. She had heard it advertised on 3AW. What a small world and what a lot of work the Group did to promote the event. The lovely gardens were a mass of new growth and subtle salvia flowers. I appreciated the well laid out plantings that showcased the salvia families diversity and kept me intrigued. Under the oak trees the tables of salvia sales were well attended. The tables also provided both salvia enthusiasts and novices with a place to mingle and share information There was an inviting bustle and hospitality in the hall. A cool place on a warm day and I was very well fed. The day was perfect and the official proceedings were blessed by the sun and applauded by those present. I congratulate the members on their achievement.

Cheers Sue Bayre

Salvia enthusiasts and friends old and new from all over Victoria and interstate gathered at the salvia display garden. Ray and Heather Boatman were so pleased that Ray was out of hospital in time to come and it was good to see Bill Whitehead from Geelong both very early members of the Salvia Study Group.

Making the labels for the Salvia Fanatics Collection at Nobelius

It was all Lyndi's idea. The plants at Nobelius would have to be clearly and accurately labelled for the grand opening in November. She wanted quality enduring labels befitting of the status of the collection. No, they were not to be hand written and they would have to be printed on quality material.

It all began to happen when Graham Ellis advised Lyndi that Holmesglen College of TAFE was updating its prehistoric engraving machine. (Indeed this decision can be likened to a current day farmer deciding to update a steam powered traction engine with a modern diesel tractor). Nonetheless, Lyndi persuaded Graham to put in a bid for the ancient machine and the events described below indicate that the bid must have been successful. The next thing was to make the machine work. It seems that Jillian volunteered the services of her generous engineering-savvy brother, Peter Tucker, who lives in Renmark. Jillian delivered the machine to Peter and some time later he advised her that it was now functioning and moreover, that with a lot of tender loving care (TLC) and lots of adjustments, it could actually be coerced to cut a few templates before it needed more TLC and adjustments to cut a few more labels. It also required a lot of determination to master the computer control system which was so old that it had to be controlled by function keys and not with a mouse.

The next job was to find somebody who was both careful and fastidious about the naming and spelling of salvia species and cultivars etc AND was also computer and mechanically savvy. Moreover, given the constraints of the machine, the person who did the job had to have access to a heavy duty workbench serviced with electrical power, good lighting and dust extraction facilities which could be left set up for a fortnight while the operator got the job done. Well, Lyndi decided that Pat, who has written in this and other Newsletters about the scientific and grammatical rules as they apply to naming salvias and is also well known to be very professional in any job she undertakes, was the person to do the job. (Lyndi can always be relied upon to make decisions). So Jillian took Pat on a 3-day expedition to Renmark to receive instructions on the operation of the engraving machine which they then brought back to Warrandyte together with the associated computer, screen, keyboard, operating manuals and various extras.

This stuff is not the sort of thing you can set up on the kitchen table – no table would be able to stand the weight or the vibrations from the cutting action and no household would be prepared to tolerate the racket that it makes let alone tie up their kitchen for a fortnight. Now everybody has their own private corner or space into which they can withdraw and get away from things. For salvia fanatics this is usually their garden but my retreat is my workshop – it is my hallowed space where I can think my own thoughts and do my own thing whenever I want. And so of course, what happens? Yes, the whole assembly was set up on my great long workshop bench and I was forced into exile for a fortnight.

The labels are made by supplying the machine with a sheet of tough laminated plastic, the lower part of which is white and the top layer black. The computer is set up so that the engraving machine cuts away the upper layer thereby exposing the white layer underneath to give white lettering on a black background. Well, at the end of the first day, most of which was spent reading the manual and struggling with the keyboard and cutter, Pat emerged at midnight with square eyes and about 6 or 7 engravings, some of which were under-engraved so that the writing was not distinct and one cut so deep that the plate had been cut right through while other plates showed other deficiencies. These problems just made Pat concentrate even harder, just I have seen her do when playing a difficult phrase she is reading for the first time on the piano. And so by the end of the next day she proudly emerged with a dozen or more perfectly engraved plates. Thereafter, with a lot of concentration, lots of TLC, and constant attention to cutting depth, she produced the superb set of labels that we now see in the garden at Nobelius. They have been mounted on custom-built holders and the design and production of these by that good Samaritan, Peter Tucker, is described by Pat in an accompanying article.

Most importantly, I am pleased to report that the engraving machine has now been evicted from my workshop and I pride myself in my own self-righteous and conceited way that I have made a very important contribution to the Nobelius labels. There can be no greater sacrifice in the cause of salvia fanaticism than for a bloke to allow his workshop to be used in this way for a fortnight.

John Anderson

SALVIA NEWS FROM ECHUCA

I am writing to tell you of the fabulous survival of the salvias in the harsh climate of Echuca. My front garden is jam-packed full of them. Last year the tall ones, Salvia 'Romantic Rose', *S.iodantha*, *S.madrensis*, S. 'Timboon' and S. 'Blue Bird' flowered beautifully but I had to relocate them as my garden resembled a jungle. They are all doing well in new spots. Salvia 'Mystique' S. 'Anthony Parker', *S. spathacea*, *S. oxyphora*, S. 'Indigo Spires' and many others all flower extremely well. Salvia *tilliifolia*, which I thought was an annual, has grown into a fairly large shrub. The bees love it! Nothing has suffered from the frosts.

There is no now lawn in the front garden. There is a circular bed in the centre with a hot pink climbing rose surrounded by *S. muiirii*, *S.chamelaeagnea*, S. 'Marine Blue' and other low growing blue and pink salvias. It looks stunning. (*I just bet it does.T*) There is also a strip of *S. discolor* along the side of the house which the tiny honey eaters just love. There are flowers all year and it is a pleasure to look at and work in. I feel so fortunate to be able to grow these beautiful salvias.

Shirley Mason

News from Southeast Queensland

What strange weather patterns we have in this enormous country! First there was flood in the early part of the year and now we have been experiencing very dry periods in Queensland whilst in some of the southern states there have been good rains. We on the Sunshine Coast are now facing water restrictions however they are not as severe as Brisbane has endured for several years. Gardeners feel victimised – why target the gardener when there is so much water wasted elsewhere! Some members of our horticultural media here have been very vocal on radio in recent times but I fear it will not do much good.

I've been seriously blitzing the garden in the past months as many areas have not had much TLC for some time. I am fortunate to have a neighbour with a horse and a lovely big stockpile of manure so I have spread at least 200 bags of manure throughout the garden! This, with the addition of Organic Xtra has given the garden a real boost. I will be using some foliar feeding very soon once I get the mulching completed. I like to use the Plant of Health Products every now and then – prior to opening our garden to the public I do a 6 week program and it really pays dividends. If you have the water available to foliar feed with a hose I feel seaweed products really assist in plants surviving dry periods. At the time of writing our garden is a riot of colour – after the recent severe pruning and restoration it is surprising to see it so lush and colourful. I am sure I couldn't have had it looking so good if I had planned it!

The microphyllas and greggii's are really at their peak – all of the Heatwave series, Salvia *microphylla* 'San Carlos Festival', S. 'Snow White', *S. microphylla* 'cerise' and *S. microphylla* 'cyclamen' to name a few. I seem to repeat myself regularly when it comes to talking about Wendy's Wish but this plant has to be the best salvia anyone can grow. It looks superb mingled with Salvia 'Joan', roses 'Jean Ducher' and 'Maman Cochet' and underplanted with catmint, calamint and cynoglossum (Chinese forget-me-not). It had layered itself so I have transplanted several about the garden to give year round colour. Salvia 'Meigan's Magic' has now been in the ground for over a year and in this time it has never stopped flowering. This is another superb salvia that looks wonderful growing alongside roses Duchesse de Brabant and Bloomfield Abundance and underplanted with blue stoeksia aster and dianthus.

A new garden bed where I have planted coreopsis, golden oregano, *S. glechomifolia* and S. 'Purple Majesty' and backed them with *Agave Attenuata* is quite eye catching. Another place I have used golden oregano is under Hybrid Musk Rose 'Cornelia' with nearby plantings of S. 'Marine Blue', *S. microphylla cyclamen* and S. Heatwave 'Flare'. The apricot garden has a backdrop of golden cannas and *S. adenopfera*, with David Austin Rose 'Graham Thomas', Tea Rose 'Anna Olivier', masses of daylilies, heliotrope, S. 'Mystic Spires' and the most lush patch of *S. blepharophylla* I have ever had! It is all that horse manure!

Trudi would be envious of the lovely colours of splendens seedlings I have popping up. Yes Trudi, I will pot some up for you! The conditions here are just right for them and many of them grow and flower well in semi-shade. Newcomers to southeast Queensland are *S. 'Magenta Magic'* and *S. curviflora* – both are doing well and beginning to flower so I look forward to seeing them develop.

I would like to mention the new cleome – *Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita'*. This plant has just been released by Aussie Winners (it has PBR) and is a superb plant. I have had the opportunity to trial it for 12 months and now have many dotted around the garden amongst the roses and salvias. It never stops flowering – does not set seed – and has no thorns as the annual variety does. I have one growing in semi-shade that is doing extremely well so it will be interesting in the hot and humid weather of February/March to see if this one fares better than those in full sun, as this year from autumn onward it performed better than through last summer. It is a perennial and we are yet to see how many years it will survive, however it is very easy to propagate for your own use if the original plant dies. Another great little compact plant from Aussie Winners is *Gaura 'Lollipop Pink'* which does not self sow as many of the gauras do. It also has a PBR. This plant has been on the market for about a year.

I am doing some research on PBR as I am very conscious that groups such as ours must be aware of the plants that are not to be propagated and sold. It is a bit of a problem in southeast Queensland as there are very few nurseries that stock the Heatwave series and *S. leucantha 'Pink Velour'* and *'White Velour'*. I have been advised by Michael Cole from PGA Australia that Heatwave *'Scorcher'* and *'Flare'* no longer have any PBR protection. Our group recently visited Aussie Winners nursery at Redlands Bay in Brisbane and were made aware of the time and money that goes into trialling plants and how many never make it to the marketplace. They have some very interesting plants coming out in 2010.

Barb Wickes

The Perennial Poppies Group Inc

8th November, 2009

News from Hobart- Spring- Late November

The wettest winter in Hobart since 1954, with nearly 300 mm, was succeeded by a very wet September with another 150 plus mm of rain for that month. With consequently relatively mild temperatures, and certainly moist soil conditions, the new season's growth of late-winter pruned salvias seemed to commence slowly, especially of such plants as *Salvia 'Black Knight'* and *S. patens* and its cultivars in the collection at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Due in part to slugs relentlessly feeding on the former, I suspect, also, that the unusually "calm" October contributed to a saturated soil that was slow to warm with a consequent delayed start to growth.

Surprisingly, losses resulting from the months of rain, in combination with ages of up to ten years, were restricted to the herbaceous perennials *S. x superba* and *S. azurea*. Disappointingly, both plants, from a donation from Sue Templeton in 2007, of the 'Large Form' of *Salvia patens* have failed to rejuvenate, although I have three replacement plants propagated last autumn that unexpectedly survived the species' season of dormancy, potted in the nursery, with frail stems and few leaves.

The flowering of *Salvia sprucei* is diminishing after three months while *S. karwinskii* is persisting into its fifth month while producing new shoots with its characteristically pink hairs, also on the petioles, that make this strong growing Central American species attractive just as a foliage plant. Apart from the constantly impressive *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'* with an almost continual display of dark blue flowers on its vigorous growth, another of the highlights in the salvia beds in late November, is *Salvia adenophora*, which had flowered only sporadically in the past two springs, but now has many short inflorescences of red flowers at the tips of its arching stems. Also a feature is the form with green calyces of *Salvia gesneraeflora* which has a mass of red corollas along its

long stems that have become horizontal due to the weight of wind and rain as well as the attentions of Wattlebirds over its extended flowering season.

Trudi, in the last SN, asked for further information about the pink form of *S.gesneraeflora*. The RTBG received this from Des Lawrence and Geelong Botanic Garden in 2004/05 as seed of *S.gesneraeflora*. It is similar in flower and leaf shape and size but with the distinguishing characteristic of a pink corolla and a white base at the back of the lower lip. The position of this shrub is sheltered with little full sun exposure and previously has only had a few flowers. Currently, the shrub is 2m high and the curving stems form a dome shape of over 3m in diameter that has more flowers than in past seasons.

An interesting new aspect of the salvia world has opened to me recently with the discovery of availability of chia seed in a local health food shop. Chia is mentioned by Betsy Clebsch in "The New Book of Salvias" and applies such usage to *Salvia columbariae*, *S. hispanica* and *S. polystachya* while Christine Yeo in "Salvias 1 and 2" also includes the first two species and *S. tiliifolia*. Reference is also made to the use of the first two and last species in the publication of the Herb Society of South Australia Incorporated's "A Reference Guide to Medicinal and Culinary Uses of Salvias ..." by Daisy Burton. The tiny seed of these species of salvia are high in protein and oil and have been used by Native Americans in the South West of the U.S. for centuries as well as Central American Indians as part of their diet. They are very nutritious and have diverse culinary uses from being used as sprouts, ground and roasted or soaked in water to form a drink. The seeds I have bought, while unlabelled apart from "Chia", appear to be *Salvia hispanica* and are composed of dark grey and white mottled seeds. After a few days of soaking they germinated and I am growing on a number of plants. Over the last two summers we have grown *Salvia hispanica* in the Herb Garden at the RTBG; these annual plants reach a height of a metre and have attractive blue flowers.

Any observations or comments in relation the above by members would be welcomed.

John Daniels

john-daniels@bigpond.com

Notes from Gruyere. October 2009

Spring is such a wonderful time in the garden with new growth emerging from the winter dormant trees; one can actually see the growth spurts in the Pomarium where the possums can't get at them. Out in the gardens it is a different story, where there are maples, liquid amber, fruit trees and roses. It was a crying shame to come out one morning on my usual quiet early morning walk and find a number of the roses with all their new growth eaten off. I wasn't too sure if it was the result of possums, rabbits or wallabies since some rose bushes are over a metre tall but I had to think of a remedy fast. As the roses are planted amongst other garden plants there isn't much room to place wire fences even if I could find scraps of wire. So I broke off stems of the tall *Artemisia velatorum* and draped this over and through the foliage. I even tried out other artemisias like *A. arborescens* and found these work equally as well because of their strong fragrance. The rougher the foliage the better it works and I have to say it does work! Leave it over the roses until the new red growth has grown up a bit and starts to appear above the Artemisia. The original set back may make flowering a little late inbut at least I will get flowers.

The Medicinal Herb Garden is slowly growing, the salvias appear to be growing the fastest and looking good [see article for Medicinal Salvias]

There is a very interesting 'happening' in my garden at the moment that I have observed with *Salvia greggii* 'Desert Blaze'. As we know, this salvia is a variegated cultivar with cream and green leaves, low growing and ideal for pots and containers. I have been growing one of mine in a container in part shade, this salvia does grow quite well in part shade or filtered light but as the days got sunnier I decided to bring it out to get a bit more sunshine.

I must say it did look lovely sitting there in the sun so I continued with my work and forgot about it for a day or two then went to check on it only to find that in the heat of the sun the lovely cream and green variegations had turned to mauve and purple. At first I thought it had been burnt on every leaf but on closer observation, found that the discolouration was in fact still quite tender and in good condition with the underneath foliage still cream and green. It did look quite interesting but I guessed that the plant had a severe 'stress' problem, water was not an issue, the pot was damp enough, it was the direct sunlight on the plant that had caused the discolouration. Observation is a wonderful thing especially if you have the interest and the time to observe...in this case I made the time! The salvia was kept in the same position in full sun for a few weeks and on cloudy days the mauve and purple colouring almost disappeared, especially in the mornings, and came back in the afternoon when the sun was the hottest. It will be interesting to see if the plant hardens up enough to lose the mauve and purple variegations altogether. The *S. greggii* 'Desert Blaze' in the garden has a few stems reverting to green so I will cut them off...a must if I am to keep the cream and green variegations, something, as gardeners we all know, that should be done! It does make you wonder though if it is a really stable plant.

The weed growth is hard to keep up with as it tries to out do the plants but I still like to keep some weed growth around a few of the plants. It helps keep the rabbits from eating the new growth on the salvias, as I found out albeit a little too late with my herbaceous salvias...especially the *S. nemerosas* and *x sylvestris* types. All the new growth and flower buds were eaten off, so now they have been covered with snippets of wire to help stop the pests getting into this area. It will be removed when the plants get to a certain height. Most other salvias have grown very well, not to mention the *S. microphylla* cultivars which spread like there is no tomorrow; underground shoots everywhere.

I do find it interesting that the only salvia cultivar of the microphyllas' that does not spread at all and will in fact be deciduous over winter is *S. microphylla* var *wislizenii*. In all the years it has grown here (my original plant) there have been no side shoots from the rootstock and no self seeding. It does make you wonder if it really is a microphylla or the *Salvia lemmonii* which was changed to a synonym and does it actually perform this way? What is the actual *S. lemmonii* like...does anyone know?

Meg Bentley

MEDICINAL SALVIAS

There are a few salvias that have been used over time for medicinal purposes one way or another and they come from various countries where indigenous folk have for centuries, passed down age old recipes for applying these medications.

I am not speaking about the salvias with hallucinogenic effects, I will not grow these, but the salvias used by the Chinese, North American Indians, Africans and Europeans. My friend just back from a holiday in Austria, Switzerland and Italy speaks about the

native vegetation in the fields and alpine slopes and one of the plants growing naturally was *Salvia pratensis*. I thought how wonderful to see this growing in the wild and to know that her mother used it in medical preparations. It reminded me of my trip to China and finding *Salvia przewalskii*, *S. trijuga* and *S. plectranthoides* all growing in the wild and all used in Chinese medicines, and we can't forget the beautiful Chinese Red Sage, *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, used in so many preparations for "womens' troubles".

In Africa, there are several salvias used for fumigation of the huts, healing sores and wounds or as sore throat or cough remedies. These are *Salvia chamelaeagnea*, *S. africana*, *S. aurea*, *S. namaensis*, *S. stenophylla* and *S. disermis*.

The North American Indians and Mexicans have for centuries used 'Chia' to either grind into flour or make a soothing, nourishing drink. 'Chia' is a common name used for several sages but the main ones are *S. columbariae* and *S. hispanica*.

In the Mediterranean region and throughout Europe and the rest of the world salvias have been put to great use either in cooking or medicinally like *Salvia officinalis* which has the greatest use and is now naturalised in many countries. The Greek Sage *Salvia fruticosa* can be used in much the same way. Clary Sage, *S. sclarea*, is used for eye complaints and has also been used to flavour wine.

Meg Bentley

A THANK YOU LETTER

On Tuesday, 10th November, members of the Bannockburn Garden club combined with members of the Western Districts region of Heritage Roses in Australia Inc. to take a bus trip up to Gruyere, where we were blown away by the salvia collection of Meg Bentley! According to our bus driver it was 35 degrees C, and we were drooping, but not so those bright and vigorous salvias, which seemed perfectly happy despite the root competition from surrounding dense bush, and a sloping site.

Amongst those that impressed us most were *Salvia tomentosa*, a lovely lilac blue, S. 'Anthony Parker' a royal blue which was extremely vigorous, and S. 'Costa Rican Blue' which was just huge and most desirable! We all admired a tree dahlia sprinkled with petite pink flowers, so exquisite and ignoring the heat.

For myself I solved a partly shaded spot problem by buying the ground cover *Salvia scutellarioides*, which should spread to create a blanket of blue. Many of us came away with delightful purchases as Meg had potted up some of her plants.

Our bus then sped (?) us up hill and down dale to the rose adorned garden of Karen Meeuwissen at Hoddles Creek. Space doesn't permit a full description, but we loved Rosa Constance Spry billowing over its bower, the "real" r. Wedding Day, and a virtual cityscape of towering echiums; most sculptural in effect. Karen told us that she leaves her hundreds of roses completely unwatered over the summer months; they look superb despite this!

Lyn Gadd of Bannockburn Garden Club organised this trip; we owe her great thanks.

Lyn Lang, Heritage Roses in Aus. Inc, Western Districts Group

COLLECTING SALVIAS

Well, I'm just a small collector, as a single-fronted Victorian cottage doesn't provide much room, and I could never have afforded the property next door when it came up for sale. But I seem to have the collecting bug. It's probably an inherited trait, as these days

most things seem traceable to one's genes. I don't think my mother contributed, as I can never remember her collecting anything in particular. She was a great reader, but was quite happy to borrow books from the library – no bookshelves piled high with books at home. And my maternal grandmother's garden seemed to have a bit of everything – trees, shrubs, perennials and a few annuals. I remember the gerberas which grew so well in Adelaide, roses in spring, and dahlias in summer and autumn, and masses of Japanese anemones later. The birds had a bird-bath under the trellised grapevines out the back.

My older brother definitely had a collecting bug, though it was for anything mechanical or electrical, and my father was not beyond saving and collecting any old parts which might come in handy on the farm. I started gardening when I was about seven, but didn't have my own garden for many years. And then I started with roses, which was later refined to heritage roses. Next I became interested in Chinese plants, and started a small collection of tree peonies. They have not fared well in the extreme heat, or the dry. Somewhere along the line I decided to grow clematis up the rose bushes, so have a small collection of them too. Then came dwarf bougainvilleas, I have about seven of them. In a sheltered spot against a wall I grew miniature cymbidiums, but I found getting enough water to them tedious. They have been replaced by the poor man's orchid, stellar or five-fingered pelargoniums. Also in wall pots is a small collection of rhipsalis – epiphytic plants with funny jointed stems and no true leaves. Salvias have been the last cab off the rank, so to speak.

Not having much room left, a good many of the salvias have had to go on the nature strip, and next-door's nature strip too – though that is easy as I take care of that anyhow. But my collecting has been curbed by the lack of room, and the harsh conditions on the nature strip. Although I would love to grow some of the large salvias which flower from autumn through to spring, I am enough of a realist to admit I simply cannot accommodate them. Now I can only plant something new by replacing another plant, potting up a new plant (when I have vowed to cut down on potted plants) or training an amenable plant up a pole!

Collectors seem to be a special breed of gardener. They are like bloodhounds when it comes to their favoured plants, sniffing out anything new or unusual, and often prepared to try something a bit difficult. Their enthusiasm extends to any books, journals and articles related to their special interest. And now, of course, the internet becomes an invaluable means to search for information world-wide. My younger brother and his wife are keen gardeners, but they seldom get beyond the common names of most things they grow, and pruning is something usually done in winter, and often quite severely. They have taken a shine to that foolproof salvia 'Hot Lips', and have planted a row of it, but seem uninterested in other kinds of salvia.

Although some collectors wear blinkers, and don't really see much beyond their chosen genus or genera, others are very open to all kinds of plants, and have gardens with fascinating combinations – from succulents, grasses, bulbs, to shrubs, climbers and trees of many kinds. They have an intense interest in plants which is a world away from someone who buys 'potted colour' from the local Bunnings store, and then wonders where best to plant it. But we small time collectors are not a patch on the very special breed of plant collectors who hunt down our favourite plants in the wild, so that we can later enjoy the results of their work. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the great time of plant hunting, and a number of salvias were recorded by the great plant hunters then, but salvias in most cases seem to have slipped below the radar as garden worthy plants.

During the twentieth century, though, a number of adventurous people have found salvias in the wild and collected their seed. We are benefitting now from their exertions. Jim and Jenny Archibald are mentioned by Betsy Clebsch in her salvia books, and now operate JJA Seeds from their home/nursery in Wales. Jim's first collecting trip was to

the Atlas Mountains in NW Africa in 1962, after which he issued his first plant and seed list. Jenny joined him at the Plantsman Nursery in England. They have since been involved in collecting trips to Corsica, Morocco, then the Mediterranean, Middle East, South America, South Africa and the SW of USA. A more recent trip has been to Central Asia. They sell both wild collected seed and seed from their own nursery grown plants, and are meticulous in the recording and naming of their stock. Their on-line ordering system is temporarily suspended while they attend to mail orders already received. Later on, try jjaseeds.com to see what they list.

This year for the first time I have tried growing salvias from seed, with good enough results to encourage me to keep going. It is good fun, and quite exciting to see the little plants poke up their juvenile heads. Fortunately salvias seem quite happy to be moved when big enough to individual pots. So although I haven't enough room to grow many/any more, I can always have something to give others to try. That's one great thing about gardening – there is always something new and interesting to do.

Geoff Crowhurst.

WERRI BEACH SOUTH COAST N.S.W

Computer problems have meant I've missed contributing to the last couple of issues of Salvia News. However I have enjoyed all the excellent reports and I'm envious of all the activities in which the Salvia Group is involved. I am particularly envious that you are able to source so many different salvia plants.

A local nursery is closing down which is really disappointing, not only because we are losing another fine independent nursery but they have been also a valuable source of salvias. At the closing down sale, I picked up a small Salvia 'Timboon Red' which I'd only heard about in the Salvia News and *S.miniata* which I don't know. I also found Salvia 'Golden Delicious- Pineapple Sage' a *Salvia elegans* unusual with its lime green leaves.

Some earlier November rain (40mls) really brought on many of the later spring flowering salvias. S. 'Magenta Magic' doubled in size and all the *microphyllas* and *greggiis* put on a burst of growth. I'd nearly lost S. 'Black Knight' after a very strong sou-easterly wind but the rain has given it a new lease of life. Even *S.melissadora* looked a bit sad for a while. The problem is we get lots of rain in one go and then none for weeks which makes it difficult in our sandy soil even with lots of mulch. The salvias can only go so long without water here.

The Sth. Africans are probably the best performers as they need no watering other than rainfall.

Salvia 'Wendy's Wish', is flowering now but I must cut it back further next time as it is a bit leggy. I've planted a paler pink *microphylla* at the base to hopefully fill out the bare bits.

I don't know about *S.guarantica* here. It seems to look droopy more than it looks good and there's so much of it, it can look unattractive when it hasn't had enough water. *(It is a very hard to get rid of weed. Trudi)*

I've had more success with *S.superba* and *S.nemerosa* this year. I tend to lose them amongst the other plants in the garden but I've been giving them more attention, feeding and giving them space. One day they might spread in drifts like they do in all the lovely garden books.

Salvia patens hasn't re-appeared! Have I lost it? Surely it should be up by now. *(snails love it as it emerges.)*

The article by Meg on propagation was most helpful. Sometimes my propagating is a bit hit and miss and I need to do more of it. Labeling has always been a failure of mine but now I have cut-offs from ice cream containers in the shed, so there's no excuse.

Hope to get down to Victoria again in the new year. You are so lucky to have such a great number and quality of nurseries to visit. Maureen Cox

An Introduction to Botanical Nomenclature

By Michael McNabb, Manager, Horticulture, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

With kind permission from the authors and GPCAA newsletter, Genus, this article has been reprinted in the Salvia News to assist anyone eager to name their new plants. The following text is based on information from "Plant Names: a Guide to Botanical Nomenclature", Third edition. Spencer, Cross, Lumley (2007)

Scientific plant names follow the recommendations of the "International Code of Botanical Nomenclature"

Greuter (1994) and the "International Code for Cultivated Plants". Brickell, C.D. et al., (2004) Legally protected names follow the conventions of the Australian Plant Breeders' Rights Office (PBR names) and IP Australia (patents, trademarks and designs). These provide a framework and rules to keep order in the world of plant names.

Family Names

Family names are not written in italics and always have the first letter as a capital letter; e.g. Myrtaceae.

Genus

Genus (or generic) names are written with a capital first letter and are always italicised, e.g. *Banksia*.

If only the genus is known, then it is OK to write the abbreviation 'sp.' for the specific epithet, e.g. *Callistemon sp.* Note: The plural of 'sp.' is 'spp.', e.g. *Melaleuca spp.*

Specific Epithet

Specific epithet names are written all lower case and in italics, e.g. *serrata*.

Species Name

The species name is formed by combining the genus and specific epithet names together, e.g. *Banksia serrata*.

If the species name is being written constantly in an article, it is OK to abbreviate the writing to *B. serrata*, unless the word *Banksia* begins a sentence. Species is written and pronounced the same in both singular and plural. Use 'species', not 'specie'.

Subspecies A subspecies is a plant that has characteristics based on its geographic distribution. Subspecies is recommended to be written as 'subsp'. It is not italicised and has no capital letter, e.g. *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *leucoxylon* is found in north west Victoria and South Australia, and *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *connata* is found in the Brisbane Ranges, west side of Port Phillip Bay and Studley Park, and displays minor but distinctive feature differences.

Variety

A variety is understood as having characteristics that differ in minor ways from the usual characteristics of the species, but not by geographical distributions. In the example below, the name identifies a large flowering variant of *Eucalyptus ovata* var. *ovata*. A variety is written by the abbreviation 'var.', which has a lower case first letter and is not in italics, e.g. *Eucalyptus ovata* var. *Grandiflora*.

Form

Form is not used very much in botanical nomenclature now. It is used to distinguish botanical trivial differences, such as occasional variations in flower or foliage colour. Form is written as 'f.' It is not italicised and is not in capitals, e.g. *Cedrus atlantica* f. *Glauca*.

Cultivars

Cultivars have distinct and desirable characteristics e.g. bright or unusual foliage or flower colour or interesting flower shapes, that can be reproduced reliably and maintained in cultivation.

There are also economically important plants in agriculture and forestry that have been selected or bred for increased yield, flavour or disease resistance. The cultivar name consists of the genus name followed by the cultivar name, or the species name followed by the cultivar name, e.g. *Cupressus* 'Swane's Golden', and *Cupressus sempervirens* 'Swane's Golden', are both correct.

Hybrids

Hybrids in cultivation are generally produced by deliberately crossing (between species), to produce an interspecific hybrid, or what we call 'hybrids'. Hybrids between two species are indicated by inserting a hybrid sign (x) between the species name of the two parents. The (x) is not italicised and the names are written in alphabetical order, e.g. *Camellia japonica* x *Camellia saluensis*. Some hybrids arising from crosses in the horticultural trade are given cultivar names without a specific epithet, e.g. *Grevillea* 'Porinda Beauty', *Grevillea* 'Jeannie' and *Grevillea* 'Rachael', are all crosses between *Grevillea alpina* and *Grevillea juniperina*. The absence of a specific epithet is a strong indication that the plant is of hybrid origin.

Synonyms

Synonyms are outdated or alternative names. Unfamiliar new names are best accompanied by their old name so that people are not confused by the new name. The way of doing this is to put the old name in brackets with 'syn' in front of it, e.g. *Lophostemon confertus* (syn. *Tristania conferta*).

Uncertain Names

When there is doubt over a plant name, a question mark is put in front of the name, e.g. ?*Davidia involucreata*. When the genus is known but the specific epithet is uncertain, a question mark is put in front of the species name, e.g. *Pinus* ?*aristata*.

Affinity

When a plant may be an extreme variant or hybrid, the abbreviation 'aff.' is put before the specific epithet, e.g. *Tilia* aff. *americana*. This means that the plant is very similar to *Tilia americana*, but does not agree sufficiently with descriptions to allow definitive identification.

What I have managed to put together here, are **some** elements of botanical nomenclature that members or keen plant collectors may use in everyday management of plants or collections or when preparing a presentation for others. Remember that this is not all the information...more the tip of the iceberg.

If you seek more information, refer to the book, "Plant Names: a Guide to Botanical Nomenclature", Third edition. Spencer, Cross, Lumley, (2007)* For a world listing of genus names see: Mabberly, D.J. (1997) The Plant Book. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

*"Plant Names: a Guide to Botanical Nomenclature" , Third edition is available for purchase from the GPC office (\$45 including postage)

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